

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

GADSDEN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
MAX D. WALKER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
35 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD.
QUINCY, FLORIDA

August 31, 2010

6:00 P.M.

This meeting was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Isaac Simmons, Chairman; Mr. Roger P. Milton; Mr. Charlie D. Frost; Mr. Judge B. Helms; and Eric F. Hinson. Also present were Mr. Reginald C. James, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board; Mrs. Deborah Minnis, Attorney for the Board; and others.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Isaac Simmons, at 6:07 p.m.

2. Public Hearing - DISCUSSION OF CLASS SIZE AMENDMENT

Mr. Simmons stated that new requirements by the State of Florida require that school districts have two public hearings for the new class size amendment.

Mr. James introduced the class size amendment team staff members: Mrs. Bonnie Wood, Dr. Sylvia Jackson, Dr. Sonja Bridges; and Mrs. Hilda Jackson. Staff members shared with the Board a power-point presentation outlining the new requirements for class size amendment.

Dr. Bridges stated that in 2002, citizens approved an amendment to the Florida Constitution that set limits on the number of students in core classes. She stated that beginning with the 2010 – 2011 school year, the maximum number of students in each core class would be 18 students in grades PK - 3, 22 students in grades 4 – 5, and 25 students in grades 9 – 12. She stated that the core courses are math, English, science, reading, social studies, exceptional student education, and foreign language. She stated that the non-core courses are art, music, physical education, career and technical education, and electives. She stated that Senate Bill 30-A passed in 2003, this law requires the number of students in each classroom be reduced by at least two students per year beginning with the 2003 – 2004 school year, until the maximum number of students per classroom did not exceed the requirements of the law. She stated that Amendment 8 – Revision of the Class Size Requirements for Public Schools – Amendment 8 will be on the ballot for the November 2010 general

election. She stated that if approved, the 2002 constitutional provision will change as follows: the maximum number of students assigned to a teacher will be 21 students in grades K - 3 (3 more), 27 students in grades 4 - 8 (5 more), and 30 students in grades 9 - 12 (5 more). She stated that class size limits do not apply to virtual classes. She stated that the Legislature is required to provide sufficient funds to maintain the average number of students required by this amendment.

Mrs. Hilda Jackson stated that the following Human Resource strategies for compliance with the class size amendment will be: consolidate classes with less than five students (particularly in the middle and high school; implement the combination classroom plan (a teacher has at least two grade levels of students in a classroom, and hire additional teachers for grade levels exceeding twelve students.

Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that the following K - 12 strategies for compliance with the class size amendment: 1) all Assistant Principals of Curriculum were provided with a summary of the class size reduction mandate, which included the class size requirements for K - 3 (18 students), 4 - 8 (22 students), and 9 - 12 (25 students) at the August 18th District Curriculum Meeting; 2) principals reporting that they were exceeding or in danger of exceeding class size limits were directed not to enroll students from outside of the school's attendance zone, if enrollment would result in class size reduction non-compliance status; 3) the K-12 Director visited each school site (Gretna, Greensboro, and Chattahoochee Elementary) that reported they were exceeding or in danger of exceeding class size limits on the first day of school (August 23rd); 4) the K-12 Director, on behalf of the Superintendent, scheduled a telephone conference with all principals on August 25th at 2:30 p.m., which allowed principals to report enrollment status, class size concerns, any challenges schools were facing during the first week of school; 5) during the August 26th EMT meeting school site challenges and strategies for correcting class size reduction non-compliance were discussed (e.g. addition of teachers at Greensboro Elementary and combo classes at Gretna and Chattahoochee Elementary; 6) MIS was asked to provide a master schedule for each school site by Friday, August 27th; 7) each school site's master schedule was reviewed by the K-12 Director for class size reduction non-compliance on Monday, August 30th; and 8) using warm-body counts reported by site principals and printed copies of master schedules, the K-12 Director will continue to monitor class size of all district schools during the week of August 30th and work closely with the site principals and the district's Human Resource Director to correct class size reduction non-compliance.

Mrs. Bonnie Wood stated that the annual compliance calculation is based on the October student membership survey. She stated that district allocation reduced by the amount of the class size reduction categorical for each student over the maximum. She stated that in 2010 - 2011, each district allocation shall also be reduced by 50% of the base student allocation (x DCD) for the number of students over the maximum. She stated that beginning in the fiscal year 2011- 2012, this portion of the reduction 100% of the base student allocation (x DCD) for the number of students over the maximum. She stated that the initial class size reduction is lesser of the calculated amount or the undistributed balance. She stated that the

Commissioner is authorized to withhold distribution of the class size reduction categorical allocation. She stated that the Commissioner shall allocate an amount equal to up to 5% of the base student allocation per FTE to compliant districts, but < 25% of the total amount reduced. She stated that funds remaining reallocated to noncompliant districts with plans certified by school boards by February 15th, and the reallocation in proportion to district's share of the total reduction, with the reallocations in excess of the reduction. She stated that schools will be assessed fines based on student counts made in October. She stated that lawmakers this year roughly tripled the penalties for districts that do not comply. She stated that the fines vary but would average \$3,000 a student. She stated that if the district reaches full compliance with 2010 – 2011 class size requirements there is no penalty. She stated that districts that are fined can reduce the penalties by up to 75% by drawing up a plan detailing how they will comply next year. She stated that the school districts that are in full compliance could receive up to \$172.53 (BSA x .05) per district FTE. (This allocation will be generated from the DOE penalty imposed on non-compliant districts). She stated that the total reallocation to all districts cannot exceed 25% of the total funds reduced from noncompliant districts.

During the power-point presentation on the new requirements for class size amendment Board members asked questions, shared their concerns and made comments.

Mr. Simmons stated that because of the State mandate for class size amendment, the district has to make the necessary adjustments.

3. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. James stated that the district has received the School Improvement Grant for East and West Gadsden High School. He stated that the School Improvement Grant was amended for East Gadsden to extend the school day by 35 minutes only. He stated that East Gadsden has a high modified schedule. He stated that the district was allocated \$1.6 million for the Race to the Top Grant entitlement portion. He stated that the Board needs to schedule a workshop to further discuss the Race to the Top Grant. He stated that the district's plan has to be presented to DOE within 90 days.

4. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Helms stated that he appreciated the Superintendent and staff for keeping the Board informed with the class size amendment and Race to the Top grant. He stated that the Board needs to be kept abreast of student enrollment data.

Mr. Hinson thanked everyone for their information during the class size amendment presentation.

Mr. Simmons stated that the district needs to be very cautious when dealing with grants. He stated that the district needs to be more abreast of the financial impacts with grants. He stated that the Board needs to be more careful with the business process, and be more tentative of the financial aspects.

5. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.